

Reed Hilderbrand Residential Landscapes 2002-2012

Multiple Locations

Photographs by Alan Ward 2002-2012

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

I began photographing the residential landscapes designed by Doug Reed and Gary Hilderbrand in 2002. Their work resonated with me because it recalls many of the principles of modern landscape design evident in Dan Kiley's work; however, they have brought forward and reinterpreted these principles with their own distinctive approach and updated vision. The last time I photographed Kiley's Miller Garden, recognized as an icon of Modernism, was in 1996. After reviewing and editing this set of images of Reed Hilderbrand's landscapes, I realized that the composition and framing of views that effectively interprets their designs, parallels the approach applied to photograph Kiley's work.

Using a wide-angle lens and panoramic views, it begins with the shape of the land. Kiley, who was influenced by the flatness of the French Garden, made a level ground plane and terraces as the base for his modernist compositions. Terraces also figure prominently in Reed Hilderbrand's designs, particularly in the transition from architecture to the landscape, however a number of views also show the land carefully shaped and adjusted with sloping planes and stone retaining walls, extending outward to define additional spaces beyond the house. On these level planes, both Kiley and Reed Hilderbrand, bring a distinctive order to the composition, which is best illustrated in a straightforward view, that aligns the edge of an image with the organized elements on the site. The orthogonal frame is amplifying and reiterating the design. There is a legibility and coherence in the work of both, and the landscape design expression, often equals or exceeds, the significance of the architecture on a site.

A geometric order to planting, featuring grids of trees, characterizes Kiley's designs, influenced by patterns common to classical gardens. Reed Hilderbrand's gardens likewise, include an order and rigor in the planting patterns, along with grids or rows of trees; however, there is a further dimension in their work, apparent when moving beyond the spaces near the residence, inspired by the site itself and its existing ecology. The geometric order is less insistent, with curving paths through vegetation, that allows for plants to adhere to their distinctive patterns and habits of growth. It doesn't read like the imposed order of the cultivated spaces surrounding a residence, but rather appears to be more relaxed, like a lawn path through a meadow, or curving stone walk between massive rhododendrons; however, these less rigidly ordered landscapes can still be deceptively challenging to create, and maintain over time.

The photography of a Reed Hilderbrand residential landscape typically follows the designed choreography of moving from the entry drive, to an arrival court, followed by the spaces framing the house, and then proceeding to areas that transition outward. My aim was to depict these landscapes in a very simple and straightforward way, and let the design come forward, without feeling the assertiveness of the photographer. The intent is to focus attention on the details of light, texture and color in the image, so that viewers can enter the picture on their own, walk along a crushed stone surface or lawn path, and appreciate the depiction of a set of rich sensory experiences in these landscapes.

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However, when processing and editing the photographs of these sites, the images take on a life of their own, with the aim to connect with the viewer, and invite longer contemplation. Some of the views shown here of terraced lawns, stone walls, linear watercourses, and paths are images that can be read as representative of the archetypes of garden and landscape design, but reinterpreted in a modern way. Each of these elemental features has appeared in gardens over time; however, can you design and craft them in such a way, and then photograph it, so that they become something more, like the mythical forms of timeless elements in a garden? That is when, after editing and processing, a photograph reverberates, when the forcefulness of an image transcends words to tap into deeper associations about the meaning and significance of gardens and landscapes.

What is involved in the act of seeing, or visualizing photographs, that allows for a photographer to make images that seem to resonate, invite longer viewing, and bring forth poetic or mythical associations? Studies in the psychology of perception opens the door to a better understanding of the processes of photographic vision. Consider how Ezra Stoller created some of the most significant images of modern architecture in the twentieth century. Many students of architecture experienced Stoller's images more intensely than the building themselves, according to Arthur Drexler, the former director of the Department of Architecture at the Museum of Art. Is it possible that an image of the landscape architecture by Dan Kiley and Reed Hilderbrand, can elicit a similar heightened response?

Stoller studied architecture and industrial design at New York University, so his perception of a building that he was photographing was guided by his own consciousness and understanding of architecture and design. With each assignment, he brought experience and values gained over his forty-year career, to make and frame views that are a personal and unique *transaction* between Stoller and the buildings designed by prominent architects. His intentions went well beyond objective seeing, they involved the enormously complex process of guided and directed perception involving design, space, time, as well as his significant past experiences, in an indissoluble whole.*

Stoller's photographs also have an esthetic dimension, which suggests that he was aiming for more than a formally organized picture, conveying information in a thoughtful way. He presents the facts of buildings, but also the values, or esthetic experience, associated with significant modern architecture. Stoller's photographs are works of art, because the images take on a life of their own, transcending their role as documents of design. His photographs are idealized images through his control and mastery of the medium, that shows us reality as we have not seen it before, and that something can perhaps be more beautiful in a photograph, than in real life. That is the photographer's aspiration, to be engaged in a creative act, that offers the surprise of making an image, that both stimulates the senses and reverberates within. Reed Hilderbrand landscapes present these opportunities for the photographer.

List of Photographs

1. Upland Road Courtyard, Cambridge, MA
- 2-3. Therapeutic Garden, Wellesley, MA
- 4-11. Hither Lane, East Hampton, NY
- 12-16. Waccabuc, Waccabuc, NY, 2002
- 17-20. Westchester Estate, Westchester County, NY
21. Baltimore Hills, Baltimore, MD
- 22-23. Six Moon Hill, Lexington, MA
24. TetteMER Road, Bucks County, PA
25. Westchester Garden, Westchester County, NY
- 26-29. Monte Vista, San Antonio, TX
- 30-39. Family Retreat, New Hampshire
- 40-42. Manatuck Farm, Stonington, CT
- 43-48. Beck House, Dallas, TX





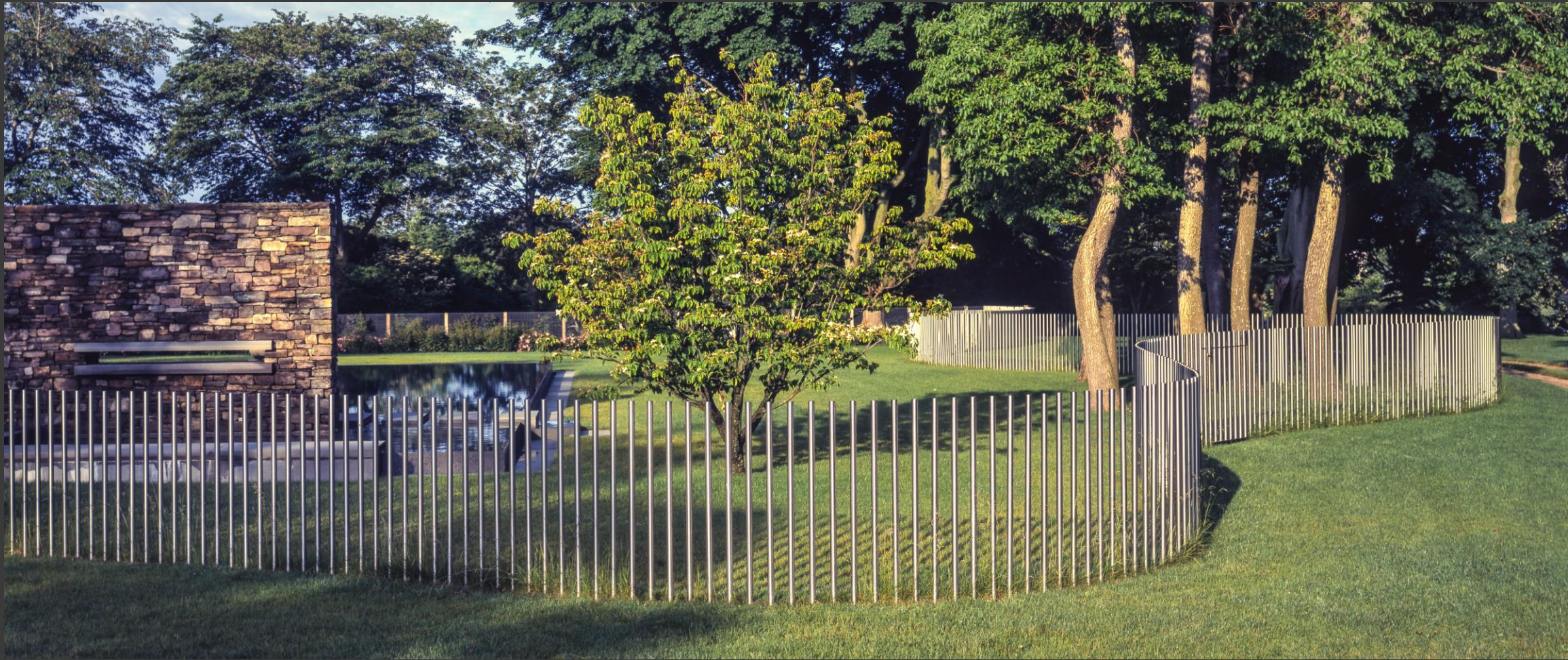




























































































Notes

Selected Publication of the Photographs:

Salvatore LaRosa and Ronald Bentley, B Five Studio, *Architecture to Landscape*, 2006

Douglas Reed and Gary Hilderbrand, *Visible/Invisible: Landscape Works of Reed Hilderbrand*, 2013

Art and Place-Reed Hilderbrand: Selected Works, 2016

Fernandez, Jennifer, "8 of the Smallest, Cutest Gardens and Outdoor Spaces," *Architectural Digest* (online), March, 2017

* For more on the psychology of perception, see *Perception: A Transactional Approach* by W. H. Ittelson and H. Cantril